

0HFT13



THIS SUMMER I WAS TRYING TO GET TO  
KNOW THIS TOWN. IT WAS BLEAK AND  
LOVELY ON CLOUDY DAYS AND SWEETENING  
AND OPPRESSIVE ON SUNNY DAYS. I WAS  
BROKE, SETTING RECORDS AND SUFFERING  
THROUGH FRUSTRATING ATTEMPTS TO  
MAKE NEW FRIENDS. IF IT WASN'T  
FOR COURTNEY TALKING ME OUT OF IT  
I PROBABLY WOULD BE IN KOREA  
RIGHT NOW RUNNING AWAY FROM  
LIFE. "IT'LL BE OKAY!" TORI WOULD  
SAY, "KARMA OWES YOU BIG." I'D  
SHAKE MY HEAD "KARMA DOESN'T  
EXIST. THE UNIVERSE IS EMPTY & RANDOM  
& I WILL DIE POOR & ALONE." BUT SHE  
BELIEVED THINGS WOULD GET BETTER WHEN  
I INSISTED THEY WOULDN'T. I WAS  
LIVING ON ISOLATED MOMENTS OF  
HAPPINESS: HOLDING HANDS W/ ANDI;  
OF OUR BIKES AT CRITICAL MASS, SEEING  
MY FAVORITE BANDS & GETTING FALLOVER  
DRUNK W/ BRIAN & MERLISSE. NOW I'M  
PRETTY GLAD I STAYED. & ANOTHER YEAR  
& HERE ARE NINE NEW STORIES. A LOT'S  
GONE DOWN SINCE WE LAST SPOKE. I  
SPENT WINTER LOCKED IN A NATIONAL  
ARCHIVE, VISITED A NEW CONTINENT &  
MOVED THE HELL OUT OF OHAWA. IN  
TWO WEEKS I'M MOVING FOR THE ~~FOURTH~~  
FOURTH TIME THIS YEAR BUT I HAVE  
A FEELING THINGS ARE GOING TO  
SETTLE A BIT SOON. & KUSOFF IS A  
PUNK ROCK FAN B'NE AVAILABLE  
FROM DISTROS LIKE PAPERTRAIL, PXS,  
TWELVEON TWO, AND MICRO COSM. YOU  
CAN ALSO SEND ME YOUR OWN ZINE  
AS A TRADE WHICH CAN BE MORE FUN.

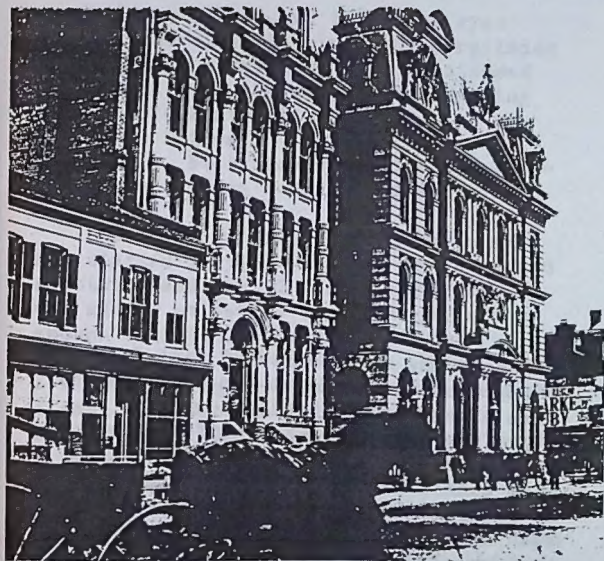
SPECIAL THANKS TO THE THREE NEW  
PATRON SAINTS OF KISSOFF: SEAN ZIO  
(ELECTRIC MAYHEM) FOR SCREENPRINT  
HELP; AMY LEIGH (TWELVEON TWO) FOR  
PO BOX SHANE; AND ADAM "TOPS"  
THOMLISON (40 W/4 LIGHTBULB PRESS)  
FOR PROOFREADING. CHECK OUT THEIR  
PROJECTS. YOU WON'T REGRET IT.  
A THANKS TO ALL THE PUBLICATIONS  
THAT STILL REVIEW ZINES & THE STORES  
AND DISTROS THAT SELL THEM. &  
THANK YOU FOR CHECKING THIS OUT.

XO/CHRIS KISS

TORONTO, FALL 2008

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# Community

It was sunny and smelled of fast food and cigarettes on Rue Saint-Denis. I emerged from a basement falafel hut with a Styrofoam cup of red hot coffee unsure of what direction I was facing. But I knew that didn't matter when my friend crossed my path. I didn't recognize him at first with his bearded face, but it was him, that was for sure.

"Have you been here long?"

"About ten minutes."

"How was the bus ride?"

"Fine. Just fine."

While we walked and talked my eyes darted from place to place, from building to building. After some time we stopped at a bench near the water after passing through Old Montreal.

"How's Ottawa?"

"Lonely. Everybody's moved away. Those who haven't I don't hang around with anymore."

As I told him this I set up my camera and started playing with the aperture and shutter speed. But I wasn't sure what I was aiming at yet. I couldn't get close enough to anything, and when I did it didn't seem to fit the frame. Since I began working in a darkroom cooperative I shot at least one roll of film each month. But I was sloppy at it.

"Do you live far from here?"

"Not too far. You'll see."

We headed down a narrow street from which we could peer over a long fence into people's back yards. There was an old, stooping house with a pony tied to the gate.



"A pony in the city?"

"Yeah, actually, the horse-drawn wagons that the tourists ride are housed near my place. Every morning before I get out of bed I hear their hooves click by. At first I smile, but then I feel so bad for them. It must be a wretched life."

We had been walking for 40 minutes. I asked, "Do you know the transit system here?"

"I like to walk, I mean, I'm really getting into walking. It's good for you and puts you in a good mental space." His scraggly beard and tanned neck seemed to confirm these words.

We arrived at his loft where he led me to the backyard which was all gravel and tall uncut grass. He fumbled with a padlock to get the thick wooden door open. "They're not actually supposed to rent this place for people to live. It's zoned industrial. We told them we were going to use it as a studio and came up with a name for ourselves. But he saw right through us and knew we were lying but he didn't care anyway."



"The Building is big and sturdy. There's a freight elevator inside. But it doesn't work anymore."

Our footsteps echoed in the stairwell of stone-grey concrete.

"We're Building a real community here. A place where people who aren't necessarily in the art world can show their stuff. A place where people share ideas, make connections and appreciate the better creative things in life."

He fumbled with more padlocks and unlatched the door to his place. The late afternoon sun filled the giant room. The ceilings looked twenty feet high and there were tall, narrow windows along one wall. There was brick and painted drywall. In the centre of the room there was a cello, a drum kit and assorted guitars. There were also plates, cups and bottles everywhere. He explained to me that they had an opening the previous night. Behind where he stood there were a number of large canvasses stacked neatly. The paintings were strange assorted objects with no sense of proportion between them and white space separating them all.

"Those are a series of spontaneous paintings based on Scrabble games."

I nodded and moved some plates and newspapers to sit on a wooden crate as my friend played records. They were slow songs with a bottom-heavy sound. Breeding pianos and deep bass. Desperate songs.

"Let's get some rest. I feel like a nap. You can lie down there in Felix's room. He's out of town." He motioned toward a ladder that lead up to a small compartment closed off by a curtain. He put on one more record as I crawled into the space. A heavily reverbed voice was singing about the universe and the dark and random nature of existence. The voice sang about the gigantic joke of it all that makes us so small.

In a matter of hours the place would be filled with the smell of good food frying in a wok and the voices of young people trying to impress each other with small jokes and stories.

I thought about the lonely factory across the field outside, the buildings we passed and the horses as I fell asleep.



# Document Everything

1.

I really wanted to go outside, but I hesitated too long and now it's raining. But before the rain, walking home from A. and G.'s, the air was thick with moisture and fog. Streetlamps, headlights and windows glowed brilliantly making the most mundane things seem like monumental events. The gas station, a work of art; the idling taxi, a drama unto itself. I wanted to take photographs but I waited too long and now it rains, cleansing the heavy air. And so now I sit in my room instead. With a headache. Reading Lerca.

2.

We dressed up like zombies and met at the Beachwood cemetery. It looked like there a hundred of us but it was hard to tell for sure. The cold drizzle made our faces drip with makeup and fake blood. We hurried to squeeze in under the gazebo where the grave site of the socialist Tommy Douglas, the pioneer of universal healthcare, stood. Muddled between massacred zombie surgeons and crusty zombie punks, I left a guitar pick on his final resting place when I thought no one was looking.

3.

Sunday night G. and I sat, hung-over, in opposite chairs in the campus radio station. The windowless, newly renovated basement room was soon filled with the sounds of our latest vinyl acquisitions. But it was the end of the week and our bones hurt and we dreaded the obligations that the next day promised. The records echoed hollow in the studio. The higher

frequencies scraped painfully against the insides of our ears. The bass sounded like it was buried under leagues of mud and sludge. The nattering refrain of the vocals rang false. I reached for my flask as G. picked out one more record, cued it up and at the moment of the previous song's conclusion set it in motion with a deft click and slide of the fader.

The sounds never seemed as important as they did that moment. It was like the words had travelled for 25 years to get to this point. To be played in this basement and on a handful of radio dials throughout the city. Everything before was just preparation. Huge smiles formed on our dirty faces. I handed G. my flask as Joe Strummer sang:

Water froze  
In the generation  
Clear as winter ice  
This is your paradise

4.

Dear E.

I turned 23. I went to see M.'s band in an Elgin Street basement. We huddled on the blanketed floor, sitting cross-legged and drank hot chocolate. While the band set up what sounded like German show tunes from the 30s played on an old record player. When the record ended M. declared that he and his girlfriend had split up. He then put three bottles of whiskey on the floor and said, "this is for sharing."

When he started to sing someone turned on a bubble machine.

5.

Sometimes I come home and I'm amazed to find a human being under all these winter clothes.



6.

Today I stayed in bed and read:

"He bolts down all events, all creeds, and beliefs, and persuasions, all hard things visible and invisible, never mind how knobby; as an ostrich of potent digestion gobbles down bullets and gun flints. And as for small difficulties and worryings, prospects of sudden disaster, peril of life and limb; all these and death itself, seem to him only sly, good natured hits, and jolly punches in the side bestowed by the unseen and unaccountable joker."

7.

M. from French class was reading a Martin Amis novel on the bus ride home today.

I am officially intimidated by her.

8.

Leaving the gallery I got on my bike and pondered the video images I had just seen. I was struck by how, in the video, Colin Campbell insisted that you "must document everything." I also liked the use of desert imagery - that space of waiting (for truth or death?) and that space of searching.

On the way home my bike broke. For good.

9.

Midnight bike ride (field notes):

There are more people out in the street. More than I had expected. The Greyhound station was surrounded by taxis. Many - well a few - people milling about outside. There's a D&B at Kent and Arlington with a neon sign that says "Open." There was a middle-aged man in shorts, and a white

shirt holding a flashlight. He looked like he was looking for a lost pet. Elgin Street was loud and busy and its bars were bustling, their patios smelling of beer and fried potatoes. The all night diner was half full. There were also buses and young people having parties in their Centertown apartments. Friends over. Boom boxes on.

10.

R. and I visited D. in the intensive care unit Friday. He was undergeeing tests after his heart attack. There was a copy of 'The Trial' by Franz Kafka next to his bed with some flowers and a card.

He said to us that he wished he had published more plays and stories before he reached #0. R. told him that I wrote "short stories" and that seemed to interest him. He said emphatically that I should try to get them published by sending them to magazines. This emphasis on writing is making me think that I should work harder on my story.

11.

I don't remember how I met S. All I remember was that one night I was on a bar stool stealing her cigarettes, Players Light. That night we stayed up all night in her room and she told me her life - everything she knew, everything she remembered and felt intensely. At the end of it all she turned to me and said, "What about you?" I hadn't expected that, being asked to share my own story. And I couldn't conjure anything up. There was no order in my memory. Certainly no beginning, middle or end.



# Community 2

September was cold and wet at sundown. I was running in the rain. The path along the canal was empty of people save for the occasional other runner. They circled the paths along the canal in name-brand spandex and nylon, I was panting in a tattered punk shirt of yesteryear and jogging pants. Somehow in the past two years since I'd started running I had never seen a jogger in jogging pants. When I reached the concrete steps near Lisgar Street I knew I was nearing the end. My feet were crunching wet leaves

while the rain picked up a little. When I stormed through the old collegiate institute I was alone and allowed myself to slow to a brisk walk. I could not distinguish the sweat from the rain. As I approached City Hall I encountered others who were out and about, running errands, returning home late from work.

Once across Blain Street I was nearly home. My heart rate slowed. I was listening to French language instructional tapes on my headphones. I was almost at my building and looking straight ahead when I was stopped by two young men in black suits. They raised their hands to address me. I could see their lips moving but only heard Michel Thomas in my headphones say, in what sounded like a pan-European accent:

"In French the verb 'to feel' and the verb 'to smell' is the same verb: Sentir. So you cannot say in French 'ce sent bon' to say it feels good. You have to describe how it feels."



I couldn't think of any of this because I found myself taking off my headphones and looking into the faces of the young men. There was an urgency in both their eyes that I could not ignore. There was a tall one and a shorter one with vague faacial hair. The taller looked like the leader and he spoke first. He politely went into a spiel about his church. It pained me as the minutes passed and he was still talking because I knew he was wasting his time. Interrupting I said, "I appreciate it, but I'm not really religious."

"Oh, I understand, but have you thought about it?"

"I have, but, it's really not for me."

"Oh, I see, no problem. Well do you know anyone, maybe friends or family that might be interested?"

"Um..." Images of everyone I know passed through my head and I knew that nearly all of them would have lost their patience with this person by now. "No, I really don't think so."

At this point, the smaller guy, who

had been quiet up to this point, began to speak. "If you don't mind, I just wanted to say that I've considered many beliefs and I have never found what I have found in this faith. Everything I've looked at in this faith has turned out to be true. Have you considered many beliefs?"

I heard myself stammering. I don't know why I was so disarmed just then but I just started babbling incoherently about how I eschew religion because of its prejudice and that I believe more in science and socialism. I think I said something about being against the war, and in favour of the right to abortion. I heard myself stuttering and trying to paraphrase Richard Dawkins about how those who believe in the bible literally preach that the world is less than 4,000 years old when carbon dating clearly shows it to be much older. I knew exactly what I meant to say before I opened my mouth, but what came out sounded all wrong. It's just like that sometimes. I didn't even want to be having this conversation.

The short young man screwed up his face and said through his teeth,

"How old does carbon dating say the earth is?"

I mumbled something about not knowing exactly what the real number is. He had caught me and I didn't know what to say. And he knew it. In desperation I said, faltering, "it's several billions isn't it?"

They just stared at me.

I could hear them quietly mocking me as I went up the stairs to my building and made my way inside. Mocked by religious dingbats, that's a new low, I thought. It didn't help knowing that they would be returning, eventually, in their suits to their home as part of a community. They would have that to hang on to as time goes by. And they seemed to have more passion and more conviction in their faith than I felt like I've ever had in any single idea. And I went to bed

that night knowing that no matter what  
kind of ideas they have to cling to,  
they'll never be alone.

**Durban, SA:**



**Verushka's  
Little Car**

In the middle of the night Bradley was driving with his seatbelt off ("They're uncomfortable," he says) and inching the speedometer up from the 120 km/h mark, the legal limit, and settling at around 150. Verushka and Nerisha were in the back making fun of him. He turned to me and said, "Do yeh like to go t'the drags?"

In the middle of the night, Durban belongs to young people who are not yet ready to inherit their parent's businesses or try to strike it rich in Johannesburg. I was

trying to not look afraid for my life. I leaned back casually in the slightly reclined passenger seat of the tiny new Volkswagen Velocity and took a deep breath, aware only too late that I must have looked a lot more frightened. The road climbed, revealing sprawling hillsides filled with houses, and fell revealing a mammoth overpass.

"The what?"

"Drag racing!" chimed in Verushka from the back.

"No, it's not really my scene. Where I live most of the people I know don't drive cars."

"Is it?"

"Yeah, it's expensive. It's like getting a second apartment. A lot of people prefer to ride their bike or live downtown so that they can walk to the things they need in life."

After a long pause Bradley scratched his goatee and said finally, "So in Canadeh yeh can't afford yeh cars?"

When we stopped at a traffic light, a souped-up sports car made its engine rev.



As the classical jock posturing of drag racing played out I reached under my seat, out of sight, and held on tight. What a useless way to die, I thought. The light changed and the sports car tore off at full speed. I opened my eyes and noticed that we just stayed in place. I let out a deep breath.



## MAIL:

Dear God! I just saw a guy walk by, dressed like me except handsome and self assured.

They've found my style! Except without irony. It's like naming your dog Spot but not getting the joke. We're all fucked.



I'm sorry to read that your summer sounds as miserable if not more so than mine. But it does seem the city has captured your heart as it did mine...I hope the city's other charms manage to warm you on cold days. If not, copious amounts of booze should do the trick - or at least knock you out trying.

Taking off from the Cincinnati airport the grounds looked like train tracks woven in an intricate spider web pattern. The clouds soon obscured my view...The grounds in Baton Rouge were entirely green. I fantasized about living here in a house with a nice garden, big porch with a hobby horse on it purely for nostalgic purposes. A porch swing, sitting drinking sweet tea, reading poetry by Bukowski or Carrel, having my own darkroom, but I digress.

02 5 1



# Community 3

On the night before Christmas Eve the wind was blowing around the winding street and cutting through our parkas with impunity. The four of us braved these savage elements to visit a friend. We were cold and wretched by the time we reached the stairs of the large and old four-storey house. It stood on a historic street downtown that traced the outline of the river. It was a transitional house for recovering addicts and, with the holidays here, everyone was gone except for Saul. When he opened the door we crowded the entrance to get some relief from the bitter cold; Saul greeted us with open arms as traces of frost melted and dripped from our eyebrows.

I had been coming here for several weeks now. The first time Saul had me over we cleaned the kitchen. First I would clean the coffee maker, the renegade coffee grinds and the crescent-shaped marks on the counter left by mugs. Then we would change the garbage and sweep the floor. It was astonishing how little cleaning there was to do.

"It's like clockwork," he told me. "We all spend a lot of time cleaning while in recovery. Some of us almost compulsively. It's therapeutic." Even the walls were spotless. The stove looked like it was fresh from a 1987 showroom floor. Everything was old and clean and in perfect working order. Only the floors creaked.

After a game of chess on the balcony we would stub our cigarettes, take off our heavy coats, and creak down the dark, carpeted hall to Saul's room. It was a square space arranged with a bed in the center, clothes in the corner - folded and piled - and coats and shirts hanging in a closet on wire hangers. Under the window were piles of books, magazines,

and sines. On the other side were rows upon rows of records just leaning against the wall.

"Listen to this," he would say, handing me an expensive-looking pair of headphones. It would be a group from Berlin or Columbus or Paris. Saul wanted new sounds, something that would stop him dead. CD box sets of radio noise, forgotten recordings of yesteryear, there was even an experimental recording of elephants playing gongs. "The elephants really like the upper registers," he told me.

We both had to leave our respective apartments. We stayed in this house. I was sleeping on various couches. Busy and frantic, we made time to meet once a week and sort out the wreckage of our lives. Funerals, bus tickets out of town, and pickup trucks full of chipped furniture.

But the house looked different the night before Christmas Eve with its usual inhabitants gone. Shadows crept across hallways like dark echoes suggesting for the first time the



generations of lives that had fallen through its corridors over time. The five of us sat in the big, bright living room on the main floor surrounded by darkness. As the night wore on Saul and I went out on the balcony to share a cigarette where the wind was not as direct.

When we were back inside the food we ordered had arrived. We ate and talked about lighter things: friends we still had in common and the small projects we were trying to get off the ground.

Then we turned on the TV and there was a music video awards show on. It was clear that fashion had changed and the music with it. And though we pleased ourselves by making jokes and dismissive comments about what we saw, something deeper in us knew that we were getting older and that we had not changed. Or that we attempted change and realized that it was impossible.



**Claustrophobic**

**Open Road**

If we imagine ourselves flying over the city and looking down we would see how the #97 bus traces its route in the shape of a 7. We boarded at the center of town. The driver accepted my expired ticket and we shuffle to the back. The bus was bright and full of people. The city outside was dark, approaching sundown. Sean was carrying, among other things, two envelopes containing our zine cover designs to be transferred to acetates and then screen printed. The bus dropped most of its load at the mall, picked up legions

of shoppers and workers, and then proceeded to the university. When we reached the transit way and traced the corner of the 7 we were on the fast track down to the all-night copy centre.

We took out the designs to admire them. We discussed our plans to make the prints work. Both of us facing forward, our cut and pasted compositions before us, we could imagine the finished product.

"Chris, we just missed our stop."

I didn't notice the bus empty out. We were now headed for the airport. We requested the next stop which only came after what seemed like an endless drive south down a dark highway. When we arrived at the stop we got off to find a deep navy sky, a sloping highway off ramp, and another road, presumably leading to the airport. I looked up at the stop where we were dropped off:

"Requested drop-off only. No boarding."

Unable to find a corresponding stop leading in the other direction we set out on foot into this unfamiliar wilderness. There we were on a gravel shoulder of the road looking out at trees, a warehouse, and a giant billboard advertising a golf excursion.

"Do you know where we are?"

"Somewhere between the airport and the mall."

"What should we do?"

"Walk."

It wasn't long before we came up to a Hilton that we had spotted in the distance.

"Oh great, we can ask directions."

"Or get a cab."

Bypassing the rear parking lot we leapt over a shallow ditch, waded through tall, overgrown grass and came up to the Hilton's bright lights.

All colour had now drained from the sky.

We arrived at the front door only to find it locked with a note taped to it.

"Thank you for your interest in the new Hilton Garden Inn Ottawa Airport.

We will be opening soon, if you wish to make a reservation..."

We were all alone in the empty night and we could find no hint of city lights anywhere. We knew we were south, but which way was north?

"What should we do?"

"Walk?"

We came up to an old road that I recognized the name of. Despite its twists and turns we followed it in the direction of what our guts told us was north. Surrounded by trees, in the absence of roadside lights, our feet marched on the gravel shoulder only intermittently illuminated by the opposing headlights of a passing car.

"Do we have any cigarettes?"

"Yes, we have cigarettes."

"Oh thank god."

As we walked and smoked my sense of time retreated. Lost in this geographical nowhere there was a creeping sense of isolation. There were no city blocks to take detours

down. Ten, twenty, thirty minutes passed as we went down the road. The passing cars made me nervous, I tried to remember and sing my favourite road songs to keep my mind off of it. But all I could think of was that old Leonard Cohen song, A Bunch of Lonesome Heroes. I started singing it to kill the silence:

A bunch of lonesome and very quarrelsome  
heroes  
were smoking out along the open road;  
the night was very dark and thick between  
them;  
each man beneath his ordinary load.

(...)

the night so thick and green;  
well I guess that these heroes must always  
live there  
where you and I have only been.  
Put out your cigarette, my love,  
you've been alone too long;  
and some of us are very hungry now  
in kexx kxx

to hear what it is you've done that was so  
wrong.

"I can't think of any more right now." I realized I could not think straight as the cars passed. I am not used to walking on a road that does not seem to go any place. A profoundly claustrophobic feeling came over me. The gravel crunched under my feet, stretching endlessly and dotted by road-kill and rusted metal. The silence was almost too much to bear.

"I have a poem I could tell you."

Thank god, I thought.

"Okay, just a minute while I remember how it goes."

A car passed and honked at us. I threw down my cigarette. Sean began to speak:

Come scared  
To this place  
Where you might lose  
Everything you thought  
You might gain,  
And make me sacred.  
I bring my absences -  
All the disappointments -  
The people who have left -  
And the times I couldn't stay.



(...)

Like my Christmas cactus

Fuchsia unfolding,  
My feline companion  
Purring by my pillow,  
My body breathing.

Come to this place.

Bloom.

I beg of you.

I lost track of time but soon traffic lights rose off in the distance like a blessing: Lester Road and Albion. We followed its twists and turns and soon arrived at the giant strip mall after another twenty minutes of walking. We were so excited when we reached the all-night copy centre. We took turns photographing ourselves in front of it unable to contain our joy. Then we noticed a piece of paper tacked to the door:

Copy Centre hours:

Monday to Friday 8 a.m. - 9 p.m.

Saturday 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Sunday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

You can shop at Staples.ca 24 hours a  
day 7 days a week

"Fuckers!"



**Soweto, SA:**  
**Devendra**

"Look there," Devendra said, pointing toward the passenger side window, "that's an apartheid-era sign." It said '68 Soweto with an arrow pointing straight ahead and 'Aeroton' underneath with an arrow pointing to the right. We drove straight ahead.

Because of the system of townships, which were originally developed to separate black South Africans from the cities during apartheid, the layout of Johannesburg is such that everything is far apart. Over the weeks I had grown accustomed to watch-

ing the landscape roll by, constantly on the move from east to west. As I watched out the window I was thinking about the history I had been reading about the white invasion in the 18th century with the British and Afrikaner settlers on one side and the Xhosa and Zulus on the other. What I could not get out of my head was a particular story about the Xhosa.

South-east Africa was colonized much later than the west and went unaffected by colonization up until the late 1700s. At first white settlers respected the chieftdom structure of Xhosa culture in which the chief or a region grants permission to visitors to use land at his discretion and can take away permission at will. But it wasn't long before white settlers began to claim to own the land and override the proper channels of Xhosa politics. .

War lasted for about three quarters of a century in a series of conflicts. The settlers and Afrikaners were successful in exploiting the division in Xhosa society. Through various invasions and attacks

Xhosa homes were systematically destroyed, crops and animals wiped out, livestock was seized and families were turned into refugees. The Xhosa struck back with guerrilla warfare but were hindered by forced removals and the influx of new settlers. There were Mfengu refugees fleeing Zulu wars in the Natal region and expanded settlements from Europe. By 1835 when Xhosa leaders capitulated and efforts were made to sign land treaties to create peace it didn't stick and more wars broke out.

Then things became even more horrible.

Lung sickness began to ravage the Xhosa population followed by an even more devastating spread of cattle disease that wiped out 80% of Xhosa cattle, their most valuable resource.

Faced with a better-armed settler enemy, disease and depletion of livestock, they were desperate in their anguish. They began to turn to older indigenous concepts of witchcraft, prophecies and sacrifice. Ancestral ideas.

A sixteen-year-old girl named Nongqawuse was in the fields one day with a friend shooting birds away from the crops. As she later told her uncle, she had a vision. Two men appeared before her and declared that they were long dead chiefs of Xhosa lore. They said to her:

You are to tell the people that the whole community is about to rise again from the dead. Then go on to say to them all the cattle living now must be slaughtered, for they are reared by defiled hands, as the people handle witchcraft. Say to them there must be no ploughing of lands...you are to tell them that these are the words of their chiefs.

News of this spread fast and was hotly debated among the frantic and near starving population. The prophecy stated also that if they did as they were told there would be an uprising on February 18, 1857 and the Xhosa would prosper again. The Xhosa chief, Sarhili had to make the decision for the population as to what action to take with regard to the prophecy. After invest-

igating the matter and speaking with Nongqawuse's uncle Mhlakaza, a councillor of the Geaceka territory, he declared that the visions were accurate and that the cattle were to be killed, foodstores destroyed and no further farming.

I could not get that out of my head. The chief whose people are under siege takes this catastrophic measure which basically leads to the ultimate self-sacrifice. I wonder what that must have been like. Was he nervous? Did he hesitate? I thought about how people (and in this case whole societies) at certain points in their lives can become so desperate that all there is left to do is turn the aggression toward yourself.

Once we reached Soweto Devendra took us to Nelson Mandela's old house (now a museum), some squatter settlements and lastly down to the Hector Pieterse Memorial Museum. This was what I had been waiting for the whole trip. To stand on the site of the 1976 Soweto uprising.



The air was warm and dry. We were surrounded by green grass and small, old houses. The whole city just seemed endlessly calm. Set loose in the museum I was overcome with intense feelings. I was getting choked up. It was nothing in particular. Just the simplicity of the presentation and the authenticity of the objects. The soft voice of Steve Biko on an endless video loop as he explained the mission and philosophy of the non-violent Black Consciousness Movement. Video likely shot shortly before he was beaten to death in his jail cell by police.

Something else in the museum caught my eye: there were these metal garbage can lids mounted on the wall which, as it turned out, were a slightly more abstract memorial of the uprising.

On June 16, 1976 there was a mass student demonstration in Soweto. Students were to meet at the Orlando Football Stadium (just outside where the museum stands) and march to the Board of Education to present their grievances.

The cause for the protest, among other things, was an unjust language law being imposed on the Bantu education system. Classes, which were traditionally taught in English, would now have a requirement for students to learn the Afrikaans language as well. The imposition of Afrikaans, reviled as the language of apartheid's most oppressive enforcers, was designed to put young black students at an academic disadvantage. By imposing a new language at the high school level, shortly before university, students would be hindered. The whole ~~there~~ thrust of the Black Consciousness Movement was focused on liberating the oppressed mind. It was a student movement based on education coupled with organized resistance. So it had to be intentional that the authorities, who already have so many racist and tyrannical laws to control the population, would then turn towards the already inadequate education system.

The police fired on protesters, killing

thirteen-year-old Hector Pieterse. By the end of the week 176 people were killed. By the end of the events a reported 575 protesters lost their lives. A photograph of a young man carrying the fatally wounded Pieterse was published and became an iconic image of the struggle and it was only then that the rest of the world, outside the USSR and sympathetic African republics, finally woke up to the obvious shittiness of the apartheid system.

So these metal garbage can lids were mounted on the wall of the museum because during the protest the demonstrators would use the lids to protect themselves from police bullets. The government response to this phenomenon was to replace all the garbage cans with rubber lids.

Outside a monument read, "To honour the youth who gave their lives in the struggle for freedom and democracy."

Devendra operates two large grocery stores in the area, the first of which opened in 1975. He employs all local people and has since been expanding into exporting. We were headed for his warehouse, located just a couple of blocks from where the Freedom Charter monument stands. We sat in the back office eating fresh lychees. I was still asking him a million questions about the uprising.

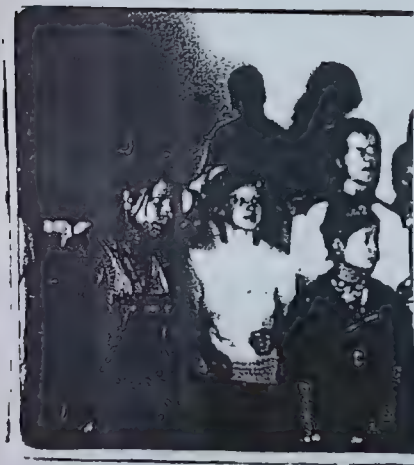
"Well I had just moved to the neighbourhood in the mid-70s so I had witnessed a lot of the commotion."

"How long did it last?"

"Several months" he answered cavalierly.

"Several months???"

"Yes," he said, "and then again on every June 16 that came after that. Well into the 80s."



**Community 4**

There was the sound of gears clicking and bells ringing. Dozens of us were swirling around the fountain in Confederation Park, round and round in a seemingly endless circle. There was the anxious feeling. Who is going to start? Who is going to lead? But once on the summer street we could feel our momentum. Voices raised in cheers and shouts. Some passed through red lights and stop signs.

"Hey everyone, let's obey the traffic rules!"

"There's too many of us, this is safer!"

"Where are we going??"

"Follow the route!"

"There is no route!"

"Bike lift at Sussex and Wellington!!"

"Oh god yes!!"

"No! Wait!"

It was too late. When our feet hit the pavement in the city's most dangerous intersection there was a collective surge of energy. We shouted for joy, unable to contain ourselves. We were like the primates in 2001: A Space Odyssey after discovering a primitive tool for the first time. Rapture.

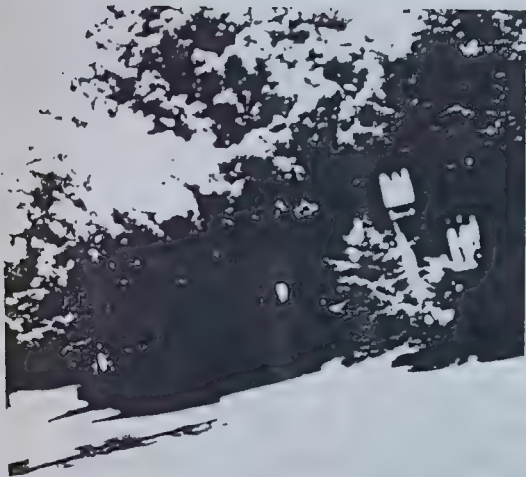
Toward the market the tourists stopped confused, car horns sounded off and children were pointing. The market looked alive with the smell of summer: sugar, cigarettes and Italian bread. We rode on long enough for our shadows to grow longer. Bells were harmonizing. Downhill from the Mackenzie King Bridge, where the city looks best, the air felt so good. I wanted to hold that image. That feeling. We were the city.

Then there were the sounds of screeching tires, curses and shoving. A

man get out of a car. More shouting, more voices raised. Both sides were being restrained, then others scrambled around the clash. A bike was raised up overhead and brought down hard. There was the sound of smashed plastic and fibreglass. Shards of motorcycle headlights were scattered along the pavement like crumbs. Huddled in different, smaller groups now, I saw people trickling away. Then came the sound of police sirens. The raised voices bantered back and forth.

There was nothing left to do but go home and feel bad.





# Paper Pills

The night I got in from my last class Jenn wasn't home but I found a note on the coffee table. I could tell pretty soon that this was not just another of the "Gone to the Manx with Kelly see you later" letters. Without taking off my jacket or shoes I picked it up and read it. I wasn't surprised. I had been anticipating this day. It had been written into every square inch of the apartment. In the fact that we never painted, the boxes of unpacked books,

and the two garbage bags full of clothes that I had tucked away in the closet ready for a hasty escape. It was only a question of which of us was going to pull the switch first.

I got on the phone and asked my sister to come by with her pickup truck. While I waited for her to arrive I started packing up my records, my blankets, and the rest of my clothes. I filled two milk crates with the books that I could not live without and left the rest. In 45 minutes I had neatly stacked everything that I need to live in a neat pile by the door.

I looked over my apartment then, with the traces of me ripped out of it, and one object in particular caught my eye: the typewriter. It was a Remington from the 1940s. It weighed about 40 pounds and made the most illegible eights for some reason. But it was the one for me. I had banged out countless zines, show flyers and letters on it. When Jenn's grandmother passed away a few years back she left it to her. I knew I should leave it and I did.

The letter was still on the coffee table. I picked it up and read it again. Then I slipped it absentmindedly into a 7" record sleeve. I looked out from the balcony and saw that my sister had arrived with her big red truck.

The last thing I piled in was the red bass guitar that I borrowed from Pete years back before he moved to Montreal. I couldn't fit it in right. The headstock poked out between a black shelf and four garbage bags full of clothes and linens.

Six months later I lived in a house with some new friends. I had a new zine out that I had written on Mike's little portable typewriter. I copied hundreds of them. I got friends to pillage their employer's photocopiers, I lied to the copy centre about how many copies I made, anything I could do. I sent them everywhere.

One night in my new home Mike handed me the cordless phone, "It's for you."

"Helle?"

I heard a sigh and then a voice.

"It's me, Jenn. I, uh, just read your

zine. Mark gave it to me. I hope you don't mind."

"Um, no that's fine."

"Anyway, I just wanted to tell you that, it was really nice. It...it made me cry actually. Thinking about when everyone was still friends and those days. Old conversations and songs, it was..." she paused, "nice."

I thanked her. I noticed I was pacing back and forth as she spoke. A nervous habit when I'm on the phone.

"Anyway," she said, "the reason I'm calling is I want to give you the Remington. I don't ever use it and I really want you to have all the things you need."

I never thought that she would read it. But that was naive. That's what zines do: end up in weird places and influence events long after they've left your hands. When someone tells me that they found my zine on a bathroom floor in Chicago or a magazine rack in a Montreal cafe and decided to drop me a line I feel a swell

of happiness. Words on paper travel of their own accord.

I had not thought about any of this, the typewriter, or Jenn's sweet gesture, for years until I realized that I had lost the letter. I think I sold the record I tuoked it in at a punk rock garage sale by mistake. So when someone went to check out the liner notes of their Converge 7" they found my kiss-off letter. Whoops.

At least we both have common names.

I.

## 'Notes:

The Clash "Combat Rock" 1982

This was before the sound of this song became famous after being sampled in MIA's song "Paper Planes."

Moby Dick by Herman Melville, 1851

It took me a year to read this book. I read a dozen other books while I read it. It felt like hard work. Yet there was something exciting and arresting about parts of it.

Fascination dir. Mike Hoolboom, 2006

A "documentary" elegizing the life of pioneering media artist Colin Campbell. Mike Hoolboom's videos are sort of like zines. Often personal, almost diary-like, his his videos cut and paste scenes and bits from other films to create a whole new narrative accompanied by his voice-over.

Michel Thomas Advanced French, Michel  
Thomas, 2004  
Working on my French

### 3 Letters

Sections of KISSOFF mail reprinted  
from M. (Tallahassee), E. (Edmonton)  
and D. (Brooklyn). If you don't want  
your letters to be reprinted in  
these pages please say so when you  
write.

Leonard Cohen "Songs from a Room" 1969  
The first Leonard Cohen record I  
ever bought. It's more than ten  
years later and I still find new  
things to like in it.

Sean Zio "The Inner Circle" n.d.  
Sean does poetry that is meant to  
be read aloud. He is confident and  
clear and comes up with countless,  
clever associations.



A History of South Africa by Leonard  
Thompson, 2001 (3rd Ed.)

I had this book with me the whole time I was in South Africa. I used it for fact-checking for this sine. On the same subject I was also endlessly inspired by Donald Woods' amazing memoir, *Bike* which was made into a not-so-inspiring movie called *Cry Freedom*.

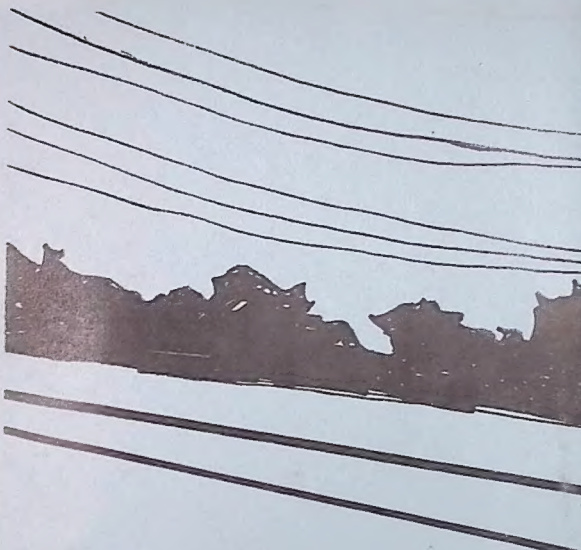
Winesburg Ohio by Sherwood Anderson, 1919

The name "Paper Pills" was taken (stolen, really) from a short story by Sherwood Anderson about a doctor who would write his thoughts down on small scraps of paper and then stuff them into his pockets where they would get crumpled into small paper balls by his hands. Over time, he would read them to the love of his life. When feeling mischievous he would throw them at the nursery man in the hospital where he worked:

"That is how to confound you,  
you blithering old sentimentalist,"  
he cried, shaking with laughter.

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